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## THE EDITOR'S DIARY.

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### A Plea for Loquacity.

WHY do American women talk so little? Have they suddenly become so religious that they consider it advisable to heed even the dicta of Solomon and the injunctions of Paul? We can hardly believe this to be the case even in the Lenten period. As we have advised frequently, neither the wise king nor the eloquent apostle was suitably equipped by experience and association for the guiding of womankind; one had too many wives, the other had none; wherefore the view-point of each, though varying widely from that of the other, was prejudiced and untrustworthy. The very petulance of Solomon's language in expressing preference for life in a "corner of the housetop" rather than "with a brawling woman in a wide house" suggests the likelihood of an annoying experience still fresh in mind, else he would not have dwelt with so much particularity upon the size of the mansion. Clearly the observation was based upon an actual occurrence resulting apparently in personal chagrin and disappointment at the untoward conduct of one of the six hundred whom he had recently installed in the gilded palace. It is worthy of note, in passing, moreover, that there is no intimation in the proverb to the effect that the cozy corner on the house-top was uninhabited. Indeed, circumstantially, in view of the necessity of stowing away so many companions, it would seem quite improbable, so we may reasonably assume that the king's peevish utterance was only discriminatory and consequently as a matter of general application meaningless.

A like conclusion is not so obvious from the further observation that "it is better to live in the wilderness than with a contentious and an angry woman," but the propinquity of the remarks indicates that the two were inspired by the same obstreperous

lady. And even at that, as has been the case usually since, the conscience of the husband seems to have been pricking even then, for he ingenuously and almost immediately adds, "Whoso keepeth *his* mouth and *his* tongue keepeth his soul from troubles"—a significant reflection and sound to this very day.

Paul's adjuration to the brethren in Corinth to forbid women to speak in the church also was made for a specific, not a general, purpose. The Corinthian women were so forward that they frequently appeared unveiled, contrary to the custom of their country, and not only spoke their minds freely in public assembly, but garbed their persons in fine raiment to attract favorable attention. Needless to add, their efforts were successful, and the meetings of the church were characterized by scenes of ribaldry and profligacy. It was only fitting and necessary, consequently, for Paul, whose first unfortunately unrecorded warning had passed unheeded, to insist that "if they would learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home"—in other words, let them remain away from the church altogether until they should be willing to "adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly array," and "learn in silence with all subjection." It was a severe rebuke, and justified, but meant only for the flirts of Corinth, not for women generally. So in every instance it will be found that the occasional Scriptural injunctions of silence so frequently quoted were placed upon womankind solely to remedy local or spasmodic evils. There is no ecumenical prohibition of feminine loquacity applicable by any stretch of the imagination to women of the present day. Their growing reticence, therefore, cannot spring from religious motive or prejudice.

Can it be that Nature is reasserting her authority? We may not deny that upon all females, except those politely considered as human, she did and does enjoin submissive silence. It is the cock that crows, the gander that honks, the father bird that sings, the bullfrog that gulps, and even the masculine grasshopper that stridently rasps his wings. So to-day, in conformity with barbaric custom, quietude is imposed upon the harem of a Turk as upon that of a chanticleer, but how long since not without cause did we suppose we perceived the disappearance of the habit among civilized peoples!

Are we not, then, driven to the conclusion that women of to-

day are beginning to talk less in the hope of thus better pleasing men? If so, while commending the motive, we would unhesitatingly question the method. American women err grievously in assuming that their actual or would-be lords dislike to hear them converse upon all suitable occasions. The mere music of their voices as contrasted with the raucous male note easily counterbalances any possible disparity in the ideas expressed. And, compared with sheer stupidity or studied sulkiness, loquacity is a joy to all mankind. Upon all grounds, therefore,—in the interest of progress and enlightenment, for the unburdening of the spirit, to enhance cheerfulness, to discourage care, to brighten the home, for sincerity's sake no less than for circumspection's, even for the preservation of peace and quiet within and without the American family,—we cry out for a loosening of the delicate tongues now so strangely and so suspiciously stilled.